

the point is not *dramatically* very well established) and he foreshadows the event and the way in which it must be endured not only by himself but by the onlookers, too, in the Christmas sermon which he preaches in the middle of the play:

A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His Love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His Ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of martyrdom.

Thus prepared we hear the arrival of the murderers, their accusations and Becket's rebuttals of them, his priest's attempt to save him, and his refusal to allow the doors to be barred. The murder happens and then Mr. Eliot has his most surprising stroke ready, the satirical prose passage in which the four murdering knights justify their action. It is worth remembering here that for this play Mr. Eliot had a particular kind of audience in mind, not merely an audience of "those serious people" in his own words "who go to festivals and expect to have to put up with poetry", but a congregation gathered not in a theatre but a church. A dramatist must be more conscious and aware than any other kind of writer of the nature and expectations of his audience. Mr. Eliot is, rightly, very much aware of this, and the knight's defence is a carefully calculated bomb timed to go off under their feet.

I have left the remaining element in *Murder in The Cathedral*, the chorus, till the end because it is the most important element in the play. If, as I have suggested, the layman may find Becket's actions and motives above his entire comprehension, that is allowed for, so to speak, in the design of the play. The chorus of The Women of Canterbury follows the events with something of the same half comprehension. They are caught up inescapably in the mystery, and, understanding or not wholly understanding, they feel at least that inescapably they must bear a share of the responsibility. In this they speak for us too. We follow the play through their eyes and they speak for us, the ordinary people caught up into extraordinary events, people "who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God"; but who nevertheless in the end acknowledge "that the sin of the world is upon our heads; that the blood of martyrs and the agony of the saints is upon our heads" and out of that knowledge, hardly learned, are able to cry at the end.

"Blessed Thomas, pray for us."



IN CONNECTION WITH RELIGIOUS EMPHASIS WEEK,
MONMOUTH COLLEGE PRESENTS
A READERS' THEATRE PRODUCTION OF
T. S. ELIOT'S

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

DIRECTED BY
PAUL GRAY
AND
BROOKS McNAMARA
ASSISTED BY
GERRY MORGAN
COSTUMES BY
DIXIE GRAY
SETTING BY
BROOKS McNAMARA

CAST

Archbishop Thomas Becket.....	JERRY SCHRADER
A Chorus of Women of Canterbury.....	ANNE BUCHANAN SUE GIBSON GRACE HALL BARBARA HINKLE JANET LINK JUANITA TEAL
Three Priests of The Cathedral.....	SPIROS ANTONIADIS JOSEPH MILLAS BOB FINCH
A Messenger.....	ANDY FOWLER
Four Tempters.....	HOWARD ESTES BOB FARRELL G. ADRAIN MAXWELL JIM NAYLOR
Four Knights.....	HOWARD ESTES BOB FARRELL G. ADRAIN MAXWELL JIM NAYLOR

SCENES

PART I
The Scene is the Archbishop's Hall on December 2nd, 1170.
TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION
INTERLUDE
The Archbishop preaches in the Cathedral on Christmas Morning, 1170.
PART II
The first scene is in the Archbishop's Hall, the second scene is in the Cathedral, on December 29, 1170.

NOTES ON MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL by T. C. Worsley

Murder in the Cathedral is Aeschylean in the sense that the action is of little importance in itself (just as it was considerably less important to Aeschylus than to Sophocles and Euripides). There is one situation, the martyrdom of Becket, but even this event itself, the actual murder, is not treated dramatically in the modern sense. There is, that is to say, no tension built up concerning it, as an action in itself, and no melodrama. There is not even conflict, for the Archbishop, when we first see him, is already anticipating his death and even waiting for it with a certain acceptance if not actual hope. The nature of this expectation or hope may be — at any rate for lay listeners — a little difficult to follow. The Archbishop at his first entrance after seven years exile explains in his own words:

They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer.
They know and do not know, that acting is suffering
And suffering is action. Neither does the actor suffer
Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent, that it may be willed,
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action.
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still.

These words, which are the clue to Becket's feelings about his martyrdom, are thrown back verbatim by the fourth of the Tempters who present themselves to Becket in the Cathedral. The first three of these are dramatically useful in reminding us of Becket's past life. The temptations which they proffer — sensual pleasure, political power, rebellion — are no longer active temptations for the changed Archbishop. They are temptations which beset him before his exile. But the fourth tempter proffers a more subtle and disturbing question. Can Becket in his own martyrdom be deliberately seeking his own death for the greater glory? Is he indeed, the Tempter raises the doubt, doing just this? And so falling into the worst sin, the sin of spiritual pride? And the Tempter sharpens the doubt by giving back to Becket the very words he spoke to the Women of Canterbury.

This is the spiritual crisis of the Archbishop and the play. Becket surmounts it (though I think we may justly raise a criticism that